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Theme for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2002 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2002 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the general debate of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council and should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision during the substantive session if possible, but in any case not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

A. Proposals of Member States

3. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale and he received the following proposals for a theme:

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(a) China:

(i) "Human resources development in the developing countries";

(ii) "The new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its implications for the developing countries";

(iii) "Strengthening international cooperation to combat transnational organized crime";

(b) Sweden on behalf of the European Union: "Global public goods";

(c) Japan: "Review of the review processes of major United Nations conferences and summits";

(d) Kyrgyzstan: "International cooperation for the economic and social development of regions with extreme living conditions, including mountainous areas";

(e) Poland: "Observance of human rights and development";

(f) United States of America: "Governance (good, accountable, transparent, participatory)".

B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations ssystem

4. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat consulted the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Economic Commission for Europe:

(i) "The role of small and medium-sized enterprises in development, particularly as a way to eradicate poverty and to promote employment";

(ii) "Development needs of countries with economies in transition: how these can be best addressed by the United Nations and its partners";

(b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

(i) "Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade";

(ii) "The development nexus: integration of economic and social policies in the context of globalization";

(c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:

(i) "The role of the United Nations system in the development of financial markets in emerging market economies";

(ii) "The role of the United Nations system in the external debt management of heavily indebted developing countries";

(iii) "Developments in biotechnology: their promise for sustainable development and the need to address their socio-economic and ethical implications";

(iv) "The role of diffusing knowledge-based industries in enhancing development";

(v) "Enhancing the role of the energy and water sectors in poverty eradication and advancement of women";

(vi) "Enhancing the role of non-state actors in sustaining the socio-economic development in developing countries";

(vii) "Assessment of the United Nations role in strengthening water resources management capacity for sustainable development";

(viii) "Follow-up on the progress made in the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21 (Rio + 10)";

(ix) "The role of the United Nations system in controlling the exploitation of human genome";

(d) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "Eradicating poverty and hunger: meeting the Millennium Summit targets";

(e) International Monetary Fund: "Progress towards the Millennium Summit goals";

(f) International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Programme: "Adequate social protection: its role in poverty reduction and in supporting sustainable economic and social development";

(g) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: "Globalization, migration and development";

(h) World Food Programme: "Hunger and malnutrition: impediments to poverty eradication";

(i) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: "The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on development, in particular in countries that have recently been affected by war and civil strife";

(j) United Nations Environment Programme: "Financing for sustainable development";

(k) United Nations Industrial Development Organization:

(i) "Enabling least developed countries to fight against poverty by taking advantage of preferential trade agreements through capacity-building for market access";

(ii) "Energy and cleaner production";

(l) World Intellectual Property Organization: "Biotechnology: the unravelling of the human and other genomes";

(m) International Civil Aviation Organization: "Financing of civil aviation in the developing countries as a part of development of infrastructure for economic progress".

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

5. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1995/17, recommended that the Council dedicate a high-level segment to evaluating the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development within the United Nations system, including the work of the international financial institutions and specialized agencies.

6. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/86, invited the Council to consider including the question of violence against women at the high-level segment of one of its forthcoming sessions, in the context of its discussion on the human rights of women.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

7. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may wish to choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (I));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development specified that the Council, at its high-level segment, should consider major issues for international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. The high-level segment should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO (see General Assembly resolution 51/240, para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would quality as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, wish to consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

8. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1
Themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments since 1995

1995. Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

1996. International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities.

1997. Fostering and enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade.

1998. Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for developing countries and least developed countries, in the context of globalization and liberalization.

1999. The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.

2000. Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.

2001. The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.

II. Possible themes for the coordination segment

9. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1 (see A/50/3/Rev.1, chap. III, para. 22), the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (see E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

A. Proposals of Member States

10. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale and he received the following written proposals for a theme:

(a) China: "Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development";

(b) Sweden on behalf of the European Union: "Millennium Summit targets/ follow-up to United Nations conferences";

(c) Japan: "Support for national efforts to build accurate statistics on development targets established by major United Nations conferences and summits";

(d) Republic of Poland: "Information technology for economic and social development";

(e) The United States of America: "Security of United Nations personnel in the field".

B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

11. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs consulted the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Economic Commission for Europe: "Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development";

(b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

(i) "Follow-up of special sessions of the General Assembly and other global conferences held in 2001";

(ii) "Follow-up to the Third International Conference on the Least Developed Countries";

(iii) "Governance";

(c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:

(i) "Impact of environmental regulations on international trade";

(ii) "Impact of economic globalization on social conditions in the developing countries";

(iii) "Contributions by new technologies to resolving global and local environmental problems and to ameliorating environmental damage";

(iv) "Knowledge-based sustainable development: promises and dilemma posed by paradigms shifts and emerging actors";

(v) "Fostering intra- and interregional cooperation for achieving sustainable development in developing countries: the role of energy and water sectors";

(vi) "Options for improved management of water delivery and sanitation services in the urban and rural communities of developing countries";

(vii) "Mechanism to mitigate water scarcity and enhance water security in developing countries";

(viii) "Fresh water, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation";

(ix) "Developments in desalination technology and its role in mitigating water scarcity";

(x) "Coordinated follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environmental Development in preparation for the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit and accelerated implementation of Agenda 21";

(c) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: "The role of NGOs, in particular local NGOs, and civil society in countries facing conflict or developmental challenges";

(d) United Nations Environment Programme: "Coordination of the United Nations system to address wide-ranging environmental threats in a globalized economy";

(e) World Food Programme: "A coordinated United Nations system-wide effort to eliminate low birth weight and enhance child survival".

C. Proposals of the intergovernmental bodies

12. The Commission on the Status of Women recommended that the Council devote a future coordination segment, by 2005, to the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and to identify further strategies to accelerate their implementation, and as part of this review and appraisal to request the functional commissions to report on the progress made in implementing agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Council in their work.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

13. In selecting a theme for its coordination segment, the Council may wish to take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system. Themes examined by the Council at its coordination segment in previous years are listed in box 2.

Box 2
Themes considered by the Council at its coordination segments

1995. Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

1996. Coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes).

1997. Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation.

1998. Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

1999. Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development.

2000. Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda.

2001. The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnership with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.

14. It should also be underscored that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. In its resolution 50/227, the Assembly provided that the Council might give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also choose a sectoral theme, should it decide to do so, at its substantive session.

III. Proposals by the Secretary-General

15. The Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Millennium Summit by heads of State and Government (General Assembly resolution 55/2), spelled out a set of overarching goals at the national and international levels, and contained a range of commitments and targets for achieving them. The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/162, stressed the need for maintaining the political will and momentum of the Millennium Summit at the national, regional and international levels in order to translate commitments into concrete action. It called for an integrated, coordinated, comprehensive and balanced approach in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration at the national, regional and international levels, and called on all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to be involved in the follow-up to the Summit.

16. The Millennium Declaration, developed over months of talks and consultations, including the regional hearings and the Millennium Forum, which allowed people's voices to be heard, contained a broad array of specific goals and commitments, in particular in the economic, social and related fields. These goals and commitments and the relevant specific targets for meeting them address the urgent and real needs of people everywhere. The solemn declaration of the largest assembly of heads of State and Government ever, containing specific targets and deadlines, created powerful expectations and strong hopes of tangible and broad-based improvement in the life of people, especially the poorest of the poor.

17. To ensure that these goals are met within the specified time frames, the United Nations system needs to find effective means for enhancing cooperation, strengthening coherence and promoting synergy in the system's implementation of the Millennium Declaration. In particular, cross-sectoral issues and cross-cutting themes need to be highlighted.

18. In the light of the above consideration and the proposals advanced by Member States and bodies of the United Nations system, the following theme is recommended for the Council's consideration at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2002:

> **"The contribution of the United Nations system to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in the economic, social and related fields"**

19. The Millennium Declaration targets, in particular the reduction of the proportion of people living in poverty by half by 2015, can be addressed only if developing countries can grow at a much higher rate than in the past and are able to share the benefits of growth more widely among their people. Mobilization of resources, both domestic and international, is thus a key component of any strategy for the achievement of the Millennium Summit goals. The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in 2001, will be a major occasion when this critical issue will be addressed by the international community in all its aspects.

20. To enhance the Council's contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and, in this context, to enable the Council to effectively address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of this task, it would be beneficial to link the themes of the high-level and coordination segments.

21. In the light of the above considerations and taking into account the proposals advanced by Member States and bodies of the United Nations system, it is recommended that the Council take up at the coordination segment of its substantive session of 2002 the following theme:

"Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system to the International Conference on Financing for Development"